

PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE)

Background

Head lice are common and may spread in any situation where individuals gather and are in close contact. It is recognized that, from time to time, students enrolled in schools may come in contact with head lice. The identification, management and treatment of head lice shall be a co-operative endeavour between the family, the school community and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, with primary responsibility resting with the parent.

An outbreak of head lice in a school is not considered a health hazard. It is important to note that the presence of head lice is not a reflection on the level of cleanliness or parenting skills of a home. Head lice do not transmit disease.

Procedures

To ensure a common approach to the management of head lice in school communities in the District, the following procedures are provided:

1. A consultative process, which meets the needs of individual school communities, shall be developed. The process must involve the Parents' Advisory Council, the Health Authority and school staff.
 - 1.1 Discuss current process as needed with Parents' Advisory Council and staff.
 - 1.2 Establish roles and responsibilities including decisions about who is involved, what will, or will not be done.
2. There shall be a process for examining students on a proactive basis to reduce the chances of contacting head lice:
 - 2.1 Home examination – the literature does not support mass screening by Public Health Nurses or others as being effective in the prevention of head lice infestation. The most effective way to manage head lice is regular checks of your child's head at home.
 - 2.2 Checks are to be carried out at home as needed.
 - 2.3 Confidentiality will be maintained.
3. Current relevant information shall be available to the school community early in the school year.
 - 3.1 Provide current information on the detection, treatment and transmission of head lice.
 - 3.2 Make videos and/or print materials available to the school community.

4. Upon the report and confirmation of head lice in the school, notification shall take place in a timely and sensitive manner.
 - 4.1 For confirmed instances of head lice, verbal notification shall be given as soon as possible.
 - 4.2 Written notification shall be given where and when appropriate and in line with the school process.
 - 4.3 Notification shall include general information about head lice and treatment alternatives.
5. Upon notification, parents may choose to temporarily withdraw their child from school for immediate treatment. However, no child may be prohibited from attending or participating at school because of head lice.
 - 5.1 Children with confirmed head lice shall remain with their class until the parent picks them up or until the end of the school day.
6. Treatment shall take place in a timely manner and follow the recommended protocol as outlined by Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and/or the Ministry of Health, (see BC Health Guide); BC Health Link at 811, or visit: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>
 - 6.1 Parents' Advisory Councils might consider purchasing treatment products such as shampoos and nit combs to be available to the parent community.
7. If a parent is non-compliant with the reasonable application of District procedures then the matter shall be referred to the Superintendent or designate.
 - 7.1 If after repeated attempts to support the parent in this matter, by providing information, assistance, and treatment products, the problem is not being addressed in the home, it may be necessary to involve the Superintendent or designate.

Legal Reference: *Sections 8, 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act*
Health Act